

Sensory Attachment Intervention – February 2022

I am an Occupational Therapy working for an NHS inpatient CAMHS Service. I provide the Occupational Therapy cover to a Psychiatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) which is in an 8 bedded unit, but I am also part of a wider Occupational Therapy team that provide the service to two other wards, a 12 bedded General Adolescent Unit (GAU) and a 12 bedded Specialist Eating Disorder Unit (SEDU). All our 3 wards support young people from aged 13 until their 18th Birthday.

I was very fortunate to receive funding from The Foundation for Professionals in Services to Adolescents (FPSA) in order to complete this training. The training was delivered via Zoom due to Covid-19 restrictions. The course was developed and presented by Eadaoin Bhreathnach and Chris West who are extremely knowledgeable. The course was delivered over 2x 3-day blocks which was completed on February 9th, 10th, 11th and 23rd, 24th, 25th of February 2022. The course was ran each day from 09:00 until 4:30 which allowed time for all the information to be presented with time to practice the techniques taught.

The course was open to Occupational Therapists and Physiotherapists working in CAMHS, Forensic and LAC teams and as this was delivered over Zoom it allowed for Occupational Therapists working overseas in Australia to attend. The training introduced Sensory Attachment Intervention (SAI) and trained those attending in the use of the Autonomic Nervous System Profile Questionnaire which is a self-reported non standardised questionnaire that assess stress and survival behaviour patterns and gives some insight into which attachment behaviours could be activated when stressed. The training also teaches therapists how to use the Just Right State Programme which supports the exploration and development of self-regulation and co regulation for individuals who struggle to regulate their emotions. The Just Right State Programme can also be used with families and care teams for understanding of their own self-regulation and how they can support Young People through co-regulation.

The course has supported and improved my learning and understanding of the sensory and attachment ideologies. I feel that it has made a difference in the way I work with young people and their families and how I complete my assessment, interventions and contribute to clinical formulations. I would recommend this training to other Occupational Therapists working within CAMHS settings however there is lots of emphasis on sensory processing, modulation and discrimination throughout the course and at times I felt having completed Sensory Integration Level One training prior to completing SAI training would have given me a better baseline knowledge to get the most from this course.

Overall, I had a great experience of the training and am extremely grateful to the FPSA for supporting me to attend. The FPSA has also funded for my colleagues to complete the course and we are now thinking about how we can implement our learning into our service as a whole.